

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 SAB-01 AID-05 OMB-01 ACDA-05

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R 191442Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4638

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3674

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL SAUNDERS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GUU

TAGS: PFOR, SY, IZ

SUBJ: CURRENT STATUS OF SYRIAN-IRAQI RELATIONS

1. FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF SINAI AGREEMENT, WE HAVE DETECTED LULL IN SYRIAN-IRAQI PROPAGANDA WAR. LAST DIRECT ATTACK ON IRAQ IN SYRIAN PRESS TOOK PLACE ON SEPT 2 WHEN RIF'AT AL-ASAD, BROTHER OF PRESIDENT, DETAILED VARIOUS SINS COMMITTED BY IRAQIS. COLUMN "FILE OF TERROR", WHICH LISTS IRAQIS ALLEGEDLY EXECUTED BY TAKRITI REGIME, APPEARED DAILY IN AL-BAATH NEWSPAPER THROUGH SEPT 15. FOR PAST FOUR DAYS COLUMN HAS FAILED TO APPEAR.

2. AUGUST 27 ISSUE OF SYRIAN OFFICIAL GAZETTE REPOTED THAT SARG HAD RATIFIED ON JULY 31 PROTOCOL DATING FROM MARCH 31, CONFIDENTIAL

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1974 WHICH CALLS FOR JOINT SYRIAN-IRAQI CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY

FROM DEIR AL-ZOR TO BAGHDAD. AIM OF RAILWAY DESCRIBED AS
"LINKING MEDITERRANEAN WITH ARAB GULF." TARGET DATE FOR
COMPLETION OF RAILWAY IS 1980.

3. PRES ASAD TOLD NEWSWEEK EDITOR ARNAUD DEBORCHGRAVE SEPT
13 IN OFF-THE-RECORD REPLY TO SPECULATION ABOUT SINAI
AGREEMENT PUSHING SYRIAN AND IRAQ CLOSER TOGETHER THAT
"OUR RANKS ARE ALREADY CLOSED" (DAMASCUS 3592).

4. FURTHERMORE, ITALIAN EMBOFF TOLD US SEPT 18 THAT HE HAD
MET WITH SOME SYRIANS NIGHT BEFORE WHO TOLD HIM THAT THEY
UNDERSTAND SOVIETS ARE HELPING TO ARRANGE RAPPROCHEMENT
BETWEEN RIVAL BAATHI REGIMES.

5. FIRMER EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE THAW IN DISPUTE HAS NOT SO FAR
APPEARED. IRAQI AIRLINES OFFICE REMAINS CLOSED; GUARDS
STILL CLUTTERED AROUND WALL OF IRAQI EMBASSY; AND ALTHOUGH IT
IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME CONVENTIONAL AIR DEFENSE UNITS MAY HAVE
RETURNED TO DAMASCUS AREA FROM THEIR POSITIONS IN NORTHERN
SYRIA, WE UNAWARE OF LNTURN OF ANY OTHER COMBAT TROOPS
DEPLOYED IN EASTERN DESERT AND NORTH SINCE LAST SPRING.

6. COMMENT: QUIESCENCE OF PROPAGANDA FRONT CAN PROBABLY BE
ATTRIBUTED TO SYRIAN MEDIA CONCENTRATION ON SINAI AGREEMENT.
UNTIL THERE IS MORE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE THAT EITHER SIDE WANTS
TO HEAL BREACH, IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO SAY THAT ANY REAL
ABATEMENT IN SYRIAN-IRAQI DISPUTE HAS TAKEN PLACE.
MURPHY

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